

## WELCOME TO COACHES REVIEW !

Welcome to this issue of Coaches Review which features articles from Holland, USA, Spain and Ireland. The subjects covered include Fitness, Nutrition, Tactics and Psychology. There is also an article on serve and return by Nick Bollettieri and an analysis of the reasons for and the effectiveness of "groaning" by players during their strokes by Frank Van Fraayenhoven of Holland.

Many of our readers will at some stage have attended an ITF Coaches Workshop. Each year over 70 ITF courses are held in different parts of the world. These courses usually involve a suitable coaching expert visiting a country and working with coaches for a period of 7-14 days. The courses help to ensure that coaches from all over the world have regular opportunities to catch up on the most up to date coaching information. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to the scores of coaching experts that have assisted the ITF with this educational programme over the years.

The highlight of the ITF's educational programme is the ITF Worldwide Coaches' Workshop held every 2 years. The 9th ITF Worldwide Coaches' Workshop is due to be held in conjunction with the European Tennis Association and the Real Federaci3n Espanola de Tenis from 8-14 October 1995. The venue will be the National High Performance Training Centre, near Barcelona, Spain. We hope to see you there.

Coaches working closely with top National women players will be interested to learn about the new format for the Fed Cup which gets under way in April. The new look Fed Cup will consist of the eight strongest nations - based on 1994 performances - playing in the World Group on a home and away basis with the next eight strongest playing in Group One. All other nations will play in Regional Qualifying Events which have been divided into two divisions - Regional Qualifying Group One and Group Two.

The four first round winners in the World Group will advance to the Semi-finals and Final to decide the champion nation. The four first round losers of the World Group will play against the

four first round winners in Group One to decide the composition of the World Group in 1996.

Similarly, the four first round losers in Group One will play against the four best teams from the Regional Qualifying events for places in Group One in 1996.

The format, with every match being a contest for survival, promotion, relegation of the Cup itself, is certain to increase the tension and excitement for both the players and the spectators.

Matches in the Regional Qualifying events - for Europe/ Africa, the Americas and Asia/Oceania - will continue to be run on a round-robin basis, with each match consisting of two singles and a double on one day, while matches in the World Group and Group One will feature four singles and a doubles and will be contested over two days.

This change in format came about as a result of the popularity of the competition among member nations of the ITF resulting in an explosion in entries, from the inaugural 16 at Queen's Club in London in 1963 to 87 for the 1995 competition.

Once again our thanks to all the coaches who have contributed articles for this issue of ITF Coaches Review. If you have any material that you deem relevant and worthy of inclusion in a future issue, please forward it to us for consideration.

We hope you all enjoy this, our 6th issue of Coaches Review.



Doug MacCurdy  
General Manager

Dave Miley  
Development Administrator

## RETURN OF SERVE - MY OPINION

By Nick Bollettieri (USA)

*This article first appeared in "Tennis Match" magazine*

In my opinion, the return of serve is and always will be the most neglected practice part of the game of tennis. It requires, rather demands, that two players (not just one as can be with the serve) work together for a long period of time to perfect the return of serve performance.

The return, not always seen as one of the most important shots in a player's arsenal, has evolved as a matter of necessity. In the 1940's and 50's when tennis was just a country club game played with those funny, little, wooden rackets, most serves consisted of a lot of spin - either slice or as they called it in those day, the "American Twist". Players had to move forward rapidly to make the return well within the court before the effect of the spin could take place.

With time, however, came the evolution of the dynamic new rackets, streamlined balls, tremendous athletes with advanced physical fitness programmes and well educated coaches who know every aspect of the service motion. The result - balls now travel at Mach speeds and 130 mph serves have become the norm rather than the exception.

With this in mind, you have no choice but to work on improving your return of serve! But now it's not so easy. You can't move forward quite as fast as you did in the old days and you can't try to cut off the ball quite as quickly. (If you did, the ball would be behind you and a late service return is about as effective as no return at all). So I think the philosophy of returning serve under those conditions has to change, has to vary just a little.

Keep in mind these basic techniques when returning serve:

- 1 Establish a solid ready position so that you can quickly respond to any type of serve.
- 2 Never, never, never take your eyes off the ball! The majority of ball tosses will give you a clue as to what type of ball you'll be receiving. NOTE: Edberg is the exception here. All his tosses are placed far behind him to the left.
- 3 Minimize the backswing to a simple hip and shoulder rotation. Lendl, Agassi and Chang demonstrate this perfectly.
- 4 Remember, the more difficult the serve coming at you, the shorter your backswing should be.
- 5 Don't be hesitant. Be bold and GO FOR IT!

So how do you put these elements together, especially when there are a variety of serves that necessitate different types of returns or strategies?



## Returning a Slice Serve

In today's game, it is a must that you return the slice serve effectively as it is used very often as a weapon because of its' low sliding bounce and because the person returning gets pulled wide off court and out of the playing surface. This leaves the court wide open more times than not. In addition, the lefty's slice serve into the Ad court has all the attributes the righty's has in the Deuce court except it comes at a most critical part of a game - break point either up or down. With this type of serve, you have to pick up the ball and the racket early when your opponent is serving because they give clues on whether it is going to be slice, flat, kick or topspin. Zero in on the racket face as it approaches the ball at the peak of the toss, get a head start on the ball, and above all, swing out on the return. Move **DIAGONALLY** to answer the slice serve rather than parallel to the baseline. This diagonal movement, ever so slight, would get you in a better position to cut off the angle of the ball before it really spins out of control. It will also transfer your weight forward. I also suggest to go for a cross-court service return in the beginning as it allows for a greater margin of error.

## Returning a Kick Serve

The key to returning the kick serve lies in the server's ball toss. If he is throwing it towards his back, over his left shoulder, obviously the serve is either going to have topspin or a kick. Given this clue, move early to get into position to return it. You have to get to the ball before it bounces way up in the air and spins up over your shoulder. The run-around forehand that Agassi, Chang and Courier use with the semi-western grip allows them to come over the ball even though it is high - this is especially effective if the server chooses not to come into the net. Also a slice return can be an additional weapon. Mix it up and go after it.

## The Flat Cannonball

Well, if a guy hits a ball 120-135 mph, it is going to be a very hard serve for anybody to return. I think that probably the most effective way to handle a big, flat 130 mph serve is to simply say, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name", and take your chances. I say this because there definitely is an element of luck involved as well as an element of being in the right place at the right time. Don't get me wrong though, you can break these serves. If you keep a short motion backswing with a good hip and shoulder rotation, swing out on every ball and connect on one or two returns, he may miss a volley, then double fault one or two and voilá, you're up a break! So pick up the ball early, be a swinger not a pusher and go for it.

## Serve and Volleyer

It is imperative that you only play the ball - this is your target! Try to establish a few early, bold returns right off the bat and who knows, a few big returns could lead the server to experience a bit of doubt and you now have the chance to guess about where you will try your return from.

## Baseliner

You must accept the fact that for the most part, you are returning the ball to a position where the server feels most comfortable - the baseline. With this as fact, just getting it back is not enough. Instead, put the server on the defensive by selecting a position on the court in which he is most uncomfortable or awkward. Hopefully, you will then get back a ball that you can attack or place with even more offensive power. Players like Becker, Courier, Agassi, Chang, Edberg, Sampras and Lendl will take your short return of serve and play it very offensively - they may even come in on it - so get the return to a spot best for you.

## Second Serve Return

Not only are the very best players responding to a very offensive return of second serve, but we now see almost all levels doing the very same. No matter what level you may fall into, your mind and body should be geared to attack. The second phase of the offensive should include the inside-out forehand or going down the line with the run-around forehand, as well as moving closer to hit and attack, catching the ball sooner. This will throw your opponent off-guard. And why not occasionally, as the server drifts back to protect himself, hit the famous Courier drop shot?

## Perfect Practice Makes a Perfect Player

If you are going to return with the big boys, you must successfully accomplish a day to day practice regimen like we do at the Academy. Mirror your drilling sessions to ours in the following ways:

- a Place two players at net with the baseliner 2-3 feet inside the baseline. This will force him to shorten his total reaction, plus use his legs more efficiently. We find this to be an effective tool for developing an explosive return.
- b Don't drift behind the baseline. Play out all points at the line or in front of it. Drifting back is counter-productive to what we are attempting to create - a short backswing and drive.
- c Have practice partner or coach stand just behind the service line and serve to you.
- d Mental Reinforcement - forget praying that your return goes in. Start saying to yourself, "I am going to beat the hell out of the ball".

**LASTLY, REMEMBER BREAKING SERVE IS ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR OWN SERVE.**

# A MATTER OF INCHES

By Dr Howard Brody (USA)

Reprinted with the permission of the USPTR from the Jan/Feb 1995 issue of TennisPro Magazine, the official publication of USPTR Tennis Teachers and Coaches

Tennis is a game of inches. A ball that is hit out by an inch is a point lost. A shot that hits your racket an inch off of its intended impact point may result in a ball going into the net or sailing long. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the serve.

When serving, if you strike the ball when it is an inch or two higher, you will markedly increase the chances of that serve being good.

However, on a serve, it seems very insignificant whether you stand right at the baseline or a few inches behind it. When you serve, you have a certain "window" of acceptance for the ball going in, since the ball must both clear the net and land within the service box to be good.

That means there is a certain minimum angle that the ball, coming off your racket, needs in order to clear the net. There is a certain maximum angle that the ball can have and not go over the service line. The difference between those two angles is the window through which you must hit the ball in order for the serve to be good.

The size of this window (or angular acceptance) tells you how likely it is for you to succeed in getting your serve to go in. If this angular acceptance is large (a big window), then you are less likely to have a fault than when the window is small.

There are a number of parameters that influence how big the window is (how likely the serve is to go in) besides your innate ability. The size of the window depends on how hard you hit the ball, its spin, the height at which the ball is hit, and where you are standing when you strike the ball. This article will discuss the last two parameters.

If you hold everything constant and only vary the height at which you hit the ball, there is a large change in the probability of a serve landing in. For example, if you hit a ball at 110 miles an hour from a height of eight feet, you must be accurate to within 0.69 degrees for that serve to go in. If you raise the hitting point by six inches, the window opens to 0.97 degrees, an increase of almost

7% per inch. If you could raise your contact point just two inches, you will get 14% more serves in.

This 14% corresponds to an extra five first serves going in, in a typical two-set match (assuming you are presently getting in 60% of your first serves). Five extra first serves being successful in a match may be the difference between winning and losing. If you can raise the point at which your racket contacts the ball, this is clearly something you should consider doing.

How can you raise the point at which you strike the serve?

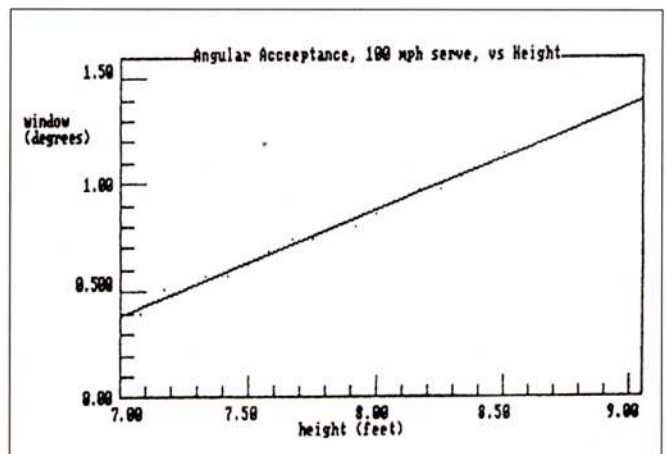
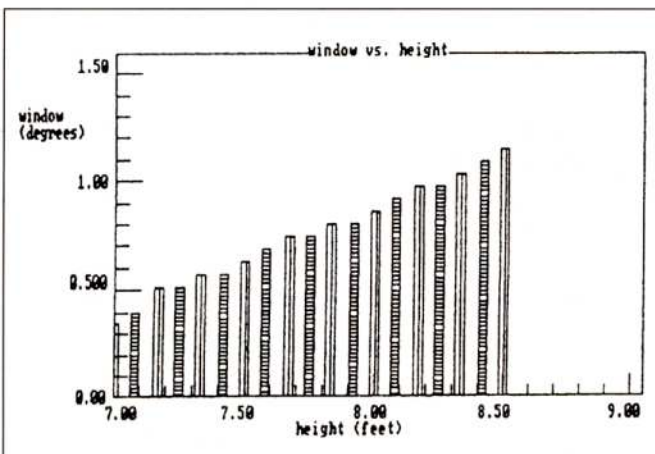
Throwing the ball up higher is not the answer, since, if you change nothing else, you will just hit it on its way down. (Actually, this is advantageous, but the reasons for it will be left to another article.)

You can make a conscious effort to reach as high as you can on your swing, hit the ball nearer to the tip of the racket, hold the racket at the very butt end (maybe with your smallest finger off the end), or get a longer racket. You can try to do all of these and see how many inches (how many extra first serves) you gain in the process.

Another thing many servers do is to "inch" up to the baseline so that the distance between their shoe and the line is microscopic. How much does this reduction in distance help your serve to go in?

Again, using the same window argument and calculation, moving in closer to the baseline by two inches on our standard 110 mph serve will increase the fraction going by 1.4% (compared to 14% increase from the two inches in height). This will result in getting in one extra first serve every other match. That's a marginal increase.

What about the argument that getting closer to the baseline reduces the time your opponent has to see, get to and return your serve? At 110 mph the serve is initially moving almost 2000 inches per second, so a two-inch reduction in path will reduce the total time by at most 1/1000 of a second. This also seems marginal.



## EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE:

It is interesting to note that Michael Chang is now playing with a racket which is one inch longer than normal wide bodies (29 inches instead of 28 inches). In light of the above research by

Dr Brody, some players (especially players less than 6 feet tall) may begin to take advantage of the rule which allows rackets to be a maximum length of 32 inches.

# USTA SPORTS SCIENCE TESTING PROTOCOL

By Paul Roetert, Patricia Piorkowski, Ron Woods and Scott Brown (USA)  
Taken from an article which first appeared in the January issue of "Racquet Sports".

In this issue we will be showing the procedure for Testing:

- (1) Agility and Speed
- (2) Upper Body Strength and Endurance
- (3) Aerobic Endurance

## 1 AGILITY AND SPEED

### What are agility and speed?

Agility and speed are your ability to move around the court quickly and smoothly to position yourself for a shot.

### Why work on agility and speed?

Agility is crucial to good court movement. It allows you to be in the correct position and provides a solid platform from which to hit the ball. Speed is important to get to the ball. Though some people have natural speed, other athletes can achieve this by training their muscles and nervous systems to produce the same effect. The faster you can get to a ball the more time you have to prepare for your shot.

## 20-Yard Dash

The 20-yard dash measure the time it takes a player to go 20 yards from a standing position. Your score is in seconds. This test measures velocity and acceleration. Velocity is how fast you can go at any one time. Acceleration is your ability to get going up to that speed.

Acceleration is an important part of tennis because many times you take the shot from a virtually stationary position.

### Hint:

To improve velocity and acceleration, use line sprints, work on getting up to speed as fast as possible and then maintain your speed.

### Procedures:

- 1 Mark off 20 yards on a tennis court using masking tape.
- 2 Using a stop watch, record the fastest time of three trials.
- 3 The recorder will stand at the finish line with his/her arm in the air. At initiation of drop of the hand and the command "Ready-Go", the athlete will start running, as will the stop watch.

## 20-YARD DASH PERCENTILES

Find your 20-Yard Dash score (in seconds) within the appropriate chart below.  
The corresponding "%" represents your 20-Yard Dash score as a percentile rank relative to other junior players in that age group.

12 & UNDER GIRLS		14 & UNDER GIRLS		16 & UNDER GIRLS		12 & UNDER BOYS		14 & UNDER BOYS		16 & UNDER BOYS	
%	Seconds	%	Seconds	%	Seconds	%	Seconds	%	Seconds	%	Seconds
>90%	3.1	>90%	3.1	>90%	3.0	>90%	3.2	>90%	3.0	>90%	2.9
90%	3.2	90%	3.2	90%	3.1	90%	3.3	90%	3.1	90%	3.0
80%	3.3	80%	3.3	80%	3.2	80%	3.4	80%	3.15	80%	3.1
70%	3.4	70%	3.4	70%	3.3	70%	3.45	70%	3.2	70%	3.15
60%	3.5	60%	3.5	60%	3.4	60%	3.5	60%	3.3	60%	3.2
50%	3.6	50%	3.55	50%	3.5	50%	3.55	50%	3.4	50%	3.25
40%	3.7	40%	3.6	40%	3.55	40%	3.6	40%	3.5	40%	3.3
30%	3.8	30%	3.65	30%	3.6	30%	3.7	30%	3.55	30%	3.4
20%	3.9	20%	3.7	20%	3.65	20%	3.8	20%	3.6	20%	3.5
10%	4.0 - 4.1	10%	3.8	10%	3.7	10%	3.9	10%	3.7	10%	3.6
<10%	4.2	<10%	3.9	<10%	3.8	<10%	4.0	<10%	3.8	<10%	3.65

## Spider Test

The spider test measures the time it takes you to pick up five tennis balls and return them individually to a specified zone. Your score is in seconds. The spider test includes agility and speed.

In this test you are allowed to face in any direction and move in whatever direction possible. The spider test includes stopping, starting, and changing direction. The spider test also includes vertical motion (bending your knees to pick up and put down balls).

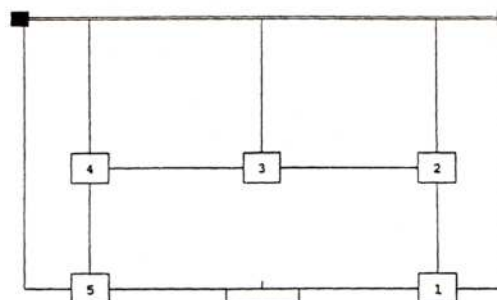
### Hint:

Use the spider test itself to work on stopping, starting and bending your knees. Also try roll and catch drills with a partner or a coach to help your agility.

### Spider Test Procedures:

- 1 Using masking tape, mark off a 12-inch by 18-inch rectangle behind the middle of the baseline using the baseline as one of the sides.
- 2 Position five balls on the court as per the diagram.

- 3 Starting at the middle of the baseline, each ball has to be retrieved and placed in the rectangle, one ball at a time in a counterclockwise direction.
- 4 Remove each ball after it is placed in the rectangle to prevent the athlete from stepping on it.
- 5 The time will be recorded using a stopwatch after the command "Ready-Go" is given.
- 6 As soon as the last ball is placed in the rectangle, the time is stopped.
- 7 The athlete has three trials.



## SPIDER TEST PERCENTILES

Find your Spider Test score (in seconds) within the appropriate chart below.  
The corresponding “%” represents your Spider Test score as a percentile rank relative to other junior players in that age group.

12 & UNDER GIRLS		14 & UNDER GIRLS		16 & UNDER GIRLS		12 & UNDER BOYS		14 & UNDER BOYS		16 & UNDER BOYS	
%	Seconds	%	Seconds	%	Seconds	%	Seconds	%	Seconds	%	Seconds
>90%	17.2	>90%	16.7	>90%	16.6	>90%	17.0	>90%	15.8	>90%	15.0
90%	17.3 - 17.8	90%	16.8 - 17.0	90%	16.7 - 16.9	90%	17.1 - 17.3	90%	15.9 - 16.4	90%	15.1 - 15.5
80%	17.9 - 18.1	80%	17.1 - 17.4	80%	17.0 - 17.2	80%	17.4 - 17.7	80%	16.5 - 16.8	80%	15.6 - 15.5
70%	18.2 - 18.5	70%	17.5 - 17.7	70%	17.3 - 17.5	70%	17.8 - 17.9	70%	16.9 - 17.0	70%	15.8 - 16.1
60%	18.6 - 18.8	60%	17.8 - 17.9	60%	17.6 - 17.7	60%	18.0 - 18.1	60%	17.1 - 17.3	60%	16.2 - 16.4
50%	18.9 - 19.1	50%	18.0 - 18.2	50%	17.8 - 17.9	50%	18.2 - 18.3	50%	17.4 - 17.5	50%	16.5 - 16.6
40%	19.2 - 19.4	40%	18.3 - 18.5	40%	18.0 - 18.4	40%	18.4 - 18.8	40%	17.6 - 17.8	40%	16.7 - 16.9
30%	19.5 - 19.8	30%	18.6 - 18.9	30%	18.5 - 18.6	30%	18.9 - 19.1	30%	17.9 - 18.2	30%	17.0 - 17.3
20%	19.9 - 20.2	20%	19.0 - 19.5	20%	18.7 - 18.9	20%	19.2 - 19.8	20%	18.3 - 18.6	20%	17.4 - 17.9
10%	20.3 - 20.9	10%	19.6 - 19.9	10%	19.0 - 19.3	10%	19.9 - 20.2	10%	18.6 - 19.1	10%	18.0 - 18.3
<10%	21	<10%	20.00	<10%	19.4	<10%	20.3	<10%	19.2	<10%	18.4

## 2 UPPER BODY STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE

### What are strength and endurance?

Strength is the amount of weight you can lift at any one time. Muscular endurance is the number of times your muscles can lift a weight or how long your muscles can hold an amount of weight.

### Why work on strength and endurance?

As mentioned on the flexibility helpful hints, strength throughout a flexible unrestricted range of motion will help prevent injury and enhance performance. By increasing your strength you can increase the amount of force with which you hit the tennis ball. By increasing endurance you will be able to perform movements as well as at the end of the match as you did at the beginning.

### Push-ups

Push-ups test your upper body strength and endurance. Your score is the number of push-ups you can do in a minute.

### Hint:

If you have a problem doing push-ups for the full minute, try using a wall push-up for a minute or longer and then progress to a modified push-up (from the knees). Upper body strengthening programmes can reduce the chance of injury, but if you have any shoulder or upper arm problems currently be sure to check with a sports medicine physician before starting an upper body programme.

### Push-ups procedures:

- 1 The athlete is positioned prone with hands shoulder-width apart and the weight of the lower body on the toes.
- 2 The athlete starts with arms extended and the head, shoulders, back, hip, knees and feet in a straight line.
- 3 The number of push-ups the athlete can perform in a 60 second time period or to failure is recorded.
- 4 To count as a complete push-up, the upper arm must reach parallel to the floor or below, the arms must be completely extended, and the straight body alignment must be maintained.

## PUSH-UP PERCENTILES

Find your Push-up score (no. in 1 min.) within the appropriate chart below.  
The corresponding “%” represents your Push-up score as a percentile rank relative to other junior players in that age group.

12 & UNDER GIRLS		14 & UNDER GIRLS		16 & UNDER GIRLS		12 & UNDER BOYS		14 & UNDER BOYS		16 & UNDER BOYS	
%	in 1 min.	%	in 1 min.	%	in 1 min.	%	in 1 min.	%	in 1 min.	%	in 1 min.
>90%	49	>90%	45	>90%	47	>90%	51	>90%	55	>90%	56
90%	44 - 48	90%	41 - 44	90%	44 - 46	90%	47 - 50	90%	51 - 54	90%	53 - 55
80%	38 - 43	80%	36 - 40	80%	40 - 43	80%	42 - 46	80%	46 - 50	80%	48 - 52
70%	31 - 37	70%	33 - 35	70%	36 - 39	70%	38 - 41	70%	42 - 45	70%	45 - 47
60%	29 - 30	60%	30 - 32	60%	33 - 35	60%	34 - 37	60%	39 - 41	60%	41 - 44
50%	25 - 28	50%	26 - 29	50%	30 - 32	50%	32 - 33	50%	34 - 38	50%	38 - 40
40%	23 - 24	40%	24 - 25	40%	27 - 29	40%	28 - 31	40%	31 - 33	40%	35 - 37
30%	20 - 22	30%	20 - 23	30%	24 - 26	30%	25 - 27	30%	28 - 30	30%	31 - 34
20%	16 - 19	20%	16 - 19	20%	20 - 23	20%	22 - 24	20%	23 - 27	20%	27 - 30
10%	11 - 15	10%	12 - 15	10%	13 - 19	10%	16 - 21	10%	18 - 22	10%	22 - 26
<10%	10	<10%	11	<10%	12	<10%	15	<10%	17	<10%	21

## 3 AEROBIC ENDURANCE

### What is aerobic endurance?

Aerobic endurance is the ability to take in, transport and use oxygen. Aerobic energy is used during prolonged, steady-paced activities mainly using the large muscle groups. Examples include jogging, cycling and swimming.

### Why work on aerobic endurance?

Aerobic endurance is important in tennis. When you are aerobically fit, you can recover faster between points and perform longer before getting tired. A strong aerobic base will allow the athlete to recover efficiently between points even throughout long, close matches. As your endurance improves, your ligaments and tendons will become tougher, reducing the threat of injury and laying the foundations for more intense training.

## When should you work on aerobic endurance?

One should challenge the aerobic system during the preparation and pre-competition phases of periodisation. First, the work should be high volume and low intensity work, and then, gradually progress to increased intensity and lower volume work-outs, such as interval and Fartlek-type activities.

In order for an activity to be considered aerobic, it must last continuously for a duration of at least 20 to 30 minutes. During aerobic training, target heart rates should be 70% to 85% of maximum heart rate. You must be patient and dedicated to increasing your aerobic endurance; it only takes a short time of inactivity to decrease your endurance.

In addition to running and walking, there are several other activities that will help develop your aerobic capacity.

They include:

- \* cycling (on a moving or stationary bike)
- \* aerobic dance (high/low impact of step classes)
- \* swimming
- \* jumping rope
- \* stair-stepping (stairmaster)

The authors suggest you use a combination of these exercises to maximise enjoyment and interest.

## The one and a half mile run.

The one and a half mile run is an accurate predictor of one's aerobic endurance. It is the amount of time it takes a player to run a distance of one and a half miles. The one and a half mile run is scored in minutes and seconds.

**Hint:**

With each trial try to achieve personal bests and not be concerned with the times of others.

**One and a half mile run procedures:**

- 1 At the command "Ready-Go", the athletes run one and a half miles on a level 440 yard track (6 laps).
- 2 Cinder or tartan tracks are recommended.
- 3 A practice run is recommended if time permits.
- 4 This test should be performed on a different day from all other fitness tests.

(A treadmill test can be substituted for the one and a half mile run under proper supervision.)

### ONE AND A HALF MILE RUN PERCENTILES

Find your One and a half mile run score (in min./sec.) within the appropriate chart below. The corresponding "%" represents your One and a half mile run score as a percentile rank relative to other junior players in that age group.

12 & UNDER GIRLS		14 & UNDER GIRLS		16 & UNDER GIRLS		12 & UNDER BOYS		14 & UNDER BOYS		16 & UNDER BOYS	
%	min./sec.	%	min./sec.	%	min./sec.	%	min./sec.	%	min./sec.	%	min./sec.
>90%	10:40	>90%	10:30	>90%	10:15	>90%	10:00	>90%	9:25	>90%	9:10
90%	10:41 - 11:18	90%	10:31 - 10:58	90%	10:16 - 10:50	90%	10:01 - 10:27	90%	9:26 - 9:50	90%	9:11 - 9:31
80%	11:19 - 11:41	80%	10:59 - 11:14	80%	10:51 - 11:02	80%	10:28 - 10:51	80%	9:51 - 10:17	80%	9:32 - 9:52
70%	11:42 - 12:05	70%	11:15 - 11:43	70%	11:03 - 11:17	70%	10:52 - 11:17	70%	10:18 - 10:40	70%	9:53 - 10:18
60%	12:06 - 12:32	60%	11:44 - 12:04	60%	11:18 - 11:31	60%	11:18 - 11:30	60%	10:41 - 11:02	60%	10:19 - 10:36
50%	12:33 - 12:48	50%	12:05 - 12:26	50%	11:32 - 11:51	50%	11:31 - 11:54	50%	11:03 - 11:17	50%	10:37 - 10:50
40%	12:49 - 13:06	40%	12:27 - 12:41	40%	11:52 - 12:22	40%	11:55 - 12:17	40%	11:18 - 11:32	40%	10:51 - 11:01
30%	13:07 - 13:44	30%	12:42 - 12:59	30%	12:23 - 13:26	30%	12:18 - 12:36	30%	11:33 - 11:56	30%	11:02 - 11:24
20%	13:45 - 14:45	20%	13:00 - 13:33	20%	13:27 - 14:12	20%	12:37 - 13:18	20%	11:57 - 12:18	20%	11:25 - 11:38
10%	14:46 - 15:03	10%	13:34 - 14:10	10%	14:13 - 14:50	10%	13:19 - 13:42	10%	12:19 - 12:38	10%	11:39 - 11:50
<10%	15:04	<10%	14:11	<10%	14:51	<10%	13:43	<10%	12:39	<10%	11:51

## NOTE:

In the last issue of Coaches Review we inadvertently reproduced the Hexagon percentiles twice, thus omitting the Sit and Reach percentiles. Congratulations to Jaime Pazmino of Ecuador who was the first to spot this error. The percentiles for the Sit and Reach Test are reproduced below.

### SIT AND REACH PERCENTILES

Find your sit and reach score within the appropriate chart below. The corresponding "%" represents your sit and reach score as a percentile rank relative to other junior tennis players in that age group.

12 & UNDER GIRLS		14 & UNDER GIRLS		16 & UNDER GIRLS		12 & UNDER BOYS		14 & UNDER BOYS		16 & UNDER BOYS	
%	Inches	%	Inches	%	Inches	%	Inches	%	Inches	%	Inches
<10%	(1.5)	<10%	(1.0)	<10%	1.0	<10%	(5.0)	<10%	(5.0)	<10%	(4.0)
10%	(1.4) - 0.8	10%	(0.9) - 1.0	10%	1.1 - 2.0	10%	(4.9) - (2.1)	10%	(4.9) - (3.5)	10%	(3.9) - (2.0)
20%	0.9 - 1.5	20%	1.1 - 2.0	20%	2.1 - 3.0	20%	(2.0) - (1.5)	20%	(3.4) - (1.5)	20%	(1.9) - 0.5
30%	1.6 - 2.0	30%	2.1 - 3.0	30%	3.1 - 4.0	30%	(1.4) - (0.3)	30%	(1.4) - 0.5	30%	0.6 - 1.0
40%	2.1 - 2.5	40%	3.1 - 3.7	40%	4.1 - 4.7	40%	(0.2) - 1.0	40%	0.6 - 1.2	40%	1.1 - 1.5
50%	2.6 - 3.3	50%	3.8 - 4.5	50%	4.8 - 5.1	50%	1.1 - 1.5	50%	1.3 - 2.0	50%	1.6 - 2.0
60%	3.4 - 3.8	60%	4.6 - 5.0	60%	5.2 - 6.0	60%	1.6 - 2.0	60%	2.1 - 2.5	60%	2.1 - 3.0
70%	3.9 - 4.7	70%	5.1 - 6.0	70%	6.1 - 7.0	70%	2.1 - 2.5	70%	2.6 - 3.5	70%	3.1 - 4.0
80%	4.8 - 6.0	80%	6.1 - 7.0	80%	7.1 - 8.1	80%	2.6 - 3.0	80%	3.6 - 4.5	80%	4.1 - 5.0
90%	6.1 - 7.4	90%	7.1 - 8.5	90%	8.2 - 9.2	90%	3.1 - 3.9	90%	4.6 - 5.0	90%	5.1 - 6.0
>90%	7.5	>90%	8.6	>90%	9.3	>90%	4.0	>90%	5.1	>90%	6.1

# GROANING AND MOANING

By Frank van Fraayenhoven (Holland)

Tennis fans are often disturbed or even annoyed by the sound some players make during their strokes. Sometimes it is just sighing, sometimes grunting or groaning. Two "groaners" playing each other, usually entice remarks from the audience, with spectators even occasionally imitating the sounds produced by the players.

Many juniors have now followed this trend of groaning. They copy it from the top players. Despite the increasing criticism of grunting and groaning during a stroke there are reasons for doing it. The sound can prove quite functional. The function can be:

## (a) Technical

A player can benefit from groaning because it may help the timing and the rhythm of the stroke. The sound the player produces can be linked to the bounce of the ball and to the contact point of ball and racket.

## (b) Physiological

There can be a positive relationship between breathing and muscle tension. Breathing out enables better relaxation (all relaxation exercises start with breathing exercises). A tennis coach might therefore ask a player to breathe out audibly during the stroke. This is especially useful for players who are out of breath or red in the face during and after every rally. This type of problem almost always comes from blocked breathing. Audible breathing (ie. a word, a sound, a sigh) makes it possible for the player to achieve a better relaxation during the stroke. However breathing is easier and more rhythmic without producing sounds (being out of breath makes it difficult to talk). The ultimate stage for breathing is therefore breathing without a high level of sound. Players who are still groaning are doing so out of habit. They have automatised the synchronisation of breathing and the stroke. Without the sound the stroke appears to be "empty" or unfinished.

Relaxation is important for the player because the stroke will be more natural, the acceleration more effective and the follow

through more profound. Players with cramped strokes suffer from too much tension in too many muscles. The muscles on the hind-side of the hitting arm, which are the muscles used to decelerate the racket after impact, should be relaxed up to the point of contact. Breathing out during the stroke can help.

Breathing is optimal when like a top spin stroke it is done from low to high! A lot of players breath too superficially - inhaling and exhaling just from the chest. Good breathing comes from the belly.

## (c) Psychologically

Groaning also has a function in this area. By making loud groaning noises during the stroke, the player forces himself to a certain level of concentration and alertness. Some players report they are less alert or aggressive with regard to the ball when not groaning. There are examples of players who are groaning in order to hinder, to annoy or to deceive the opponent. This situation is the exception and the umpire can punish the player for making unnecessary sounds during the stroke.

In conclusion we should say something about the timing of groaning. The sound can start being produced before, during or after the contact point. This points to different functions. Groaning before the contact point, mostly comes from the effort to generate racket speed. This counts especially for players with straight arms and for "power-players". The straight hitting arm implies a long lever and demands strong legs and/or body energy supply for acceleration.

Groaning on the contact point in general relates to concentration, while sounds after the hit (during the follow through) help relaxation.

## CONCLUSION:

GROANING CAN BE FUNCTIONAL, HOWEVER IT IS NOT NECESSARY AND CAN ALWAYS BE DONE QUIETER.

# DON'T LET FEAR RUIN YOUR MATCH

By Dr Allen Fox (USA)

*This article first appeared in the USTA's Sports Science publication*

Fear is a natural emotion in closely contested tennis matches. And, because it often lurks beneath the level of conscious thought, fear can cause a great deal of trouble. In fact, most players doing something irrational on court which obviously hurts their chances of winning are probably experiencing hidden fear in action.

A good example occurred last year at our league championship tournament. Two of my players, Mike and Tom, met in the quarterfinals and their positions in the team line-up hinged on the outcome of the match. It was particularly tense since only six people play singles and the loser of this match would be number seven. Mike felt extra pressure because he had had a bad year and wanted to prove himself.

They battled furiously for over three hours under a broiling sun. Tom served unsuccessfully for the match at the end of the second set, and Mike faltered when he served at 5-4 in the third. As fate would have it, they ended up in a tie-breaker. Mike, who was having sporadic trouble with his serve throughout the set, hit two double faults in the breaker to end up trailing 2-5 with his own serve to follow. At this crucial stage (behind but by no means

beaten), Mike became so upset over his serving he opted to serve underhand for the rest of the match. On the final two points, Tom knocked off one easy serve with his return and Mike double faulted. What a disastrous and foolhardy way to throw away three hours of hard work.

The decision to serve underhand appeared reasonable to Mike at the instant he made it, but to a reasonable outsider, it was crazy since there was no chance of winning with this serve. So why did he make such an irrational decision?

The tremendous stress of the situation, coupled with the fear that he was going to lose the match, made Mike want to escape. So he took the easy way out and quit. He wanted to blame the loss on something besides himself so he separated his serve from the rest of his being and blamed the loss on it. He did not lose, his serve let him down.

Unconscious fear comes in a thousand disguises and works by distorting the facts of the situation. It makes problems swell out of proportion. Real but minor difficulties appear insurmountable.

A bad call, for instance, can make an insecure competitor stop trying. "Let the cheater have the match if he wants it that badly", is the rationalisation for throwing in the towel. And this same underlying fear can magnify problems when a favourite racket breaks, a player has a sore muscle, or someone on the next court is talking too loudly. If players habitually get emotional and allow these problems to overwhelm them rather than staying cool and trying to solve the frustrations, they will end up habitual losers.

Psychologists call these kinds of perceptual distortions "defense mechanisms". They act at an unconscious level to shield us from facts which we have difficulty accepting at a conscious level. But no one is obliged to suffer indefinitely from these runaway mechanisms. Anyone can become a more effective competitor by keeping a few simple ideas in mind:

**(1) Forewarned is forearmed.**

Once players understand that the fear of losing underlies most poor behaviour on court, they can stay vigilant and reject maladaptive ideas.

**(2) Never do anything on court that does not help win the match.**

It almost seems too simple. If players could always abide by this rule, they would automatically avoid most competitive pitfalls.

**(3) No one cares why they lost a match.**

Rather than wasting their mental energy during match play thinking about the good reasons they had for losing, they would be much better off using their energy to solve problems and figure out ways to win.

# SHOULDER STRENGTHENING EXERCISE

*By Don Chu, Director of Ather Sports Injury Clinic and a member of the USTA Sport Science Committee.  
This article first appeared in the USTA's Sports Science Publication*

## The Power Drop



This is a medicine ball exercise that helps to develop not only shoulder stabilising strength, but also power in the chest muscles. Have a partner stand on a box 12-24 inches high holding medicine ball. (The ball should weigh 6-15 lbs depending on your level of strength and ability. Just as a comparison, I do this exercise with professional football and basketball players using a 35 lb ball.) Lie down on the ground with your head close to the box your partner is standing on. When the ball hits your hands, your objective is to return it to your partner. This is accomplished by bending your elbows to "give" with the ball, then immediately pushing it straight up. This utilises the elastic action of muscles to help push the ball up. This exercise can be done for 3-4 sets of 10-25 repetitions.

# TACTICAL GOALS FOR DIFFERENT SKILL LEVELS: A STEP BY STEP PLAN

*By Miguel Crespo (Spain)*

## INTRODUCTION

Some coaches seem to have forgotten the tactical side of the game. They think that tactics should be learned during matchplay and not in regular practice. This could be because they are good at explaining technical aspects (grips, shots, corrections) but they

do not know exactly what, how and when to explain the tactical concepts their players need to develop a proper game.

Below is a progressive plan to enable the coach to set tactical goals for different skill levels and an explanation on how to apply them on court.



## STEPS OF TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT

### Step 1: Beginners

The general goal at this stage is to develop the basic tactical concepts of the game. Some specific tactical goals that should be learned at this stage are:

#### A Consistency

This concept is a combination of control and security. Since this is the basic tactical goal at all stages, it should be learned as soon as possible. Once the player is able to hit the ball, the coach should begin to emphasize consistency drills (rallying between coach and student) where the student aims to pass the ball over the net 5, 10, 15, 20 times without missing.

#### B Height

This concept is used early by beginners to keep the opponent in the back court or to pass him when he is at the net. Students have to learn not only to play high balls but also low and waist height balls. Rallying between the coach and student is the best type of practice whereby the coach asks the player to hit one ball to his feet, one to his body and the last one over his head but into the court. Multiple combinations of this type can be done.

#### C Direction

This is a basic tactical idea that should be used at all stages. Players should learn to:

- \* direct the ball to where they want (open court)
- \* return the ball to the same spot and direct the ball to the opposite side
- \* change directions (eg. one to the forehand side and the next one to the backhand side)
- \* play to one side only (eg. four balls in a row to the backhand side)
- \* play "counter-step" (one ball to the forehand and two balls in a row to the backhand).

Basket drills or rally drills with the coach are the best ways to practice basic direction skills with beginners.

#### D Depth

This ability is the last one in the first stage of tactical development. Players discover the importance of depth when it is better for them to keep their opponent in the back court or when they have to make him come into the net area. Basket drills or rally drills with the coach are the best ways to practice basic depth skills with beginners. The coach, positioned in the middle of the court, gets the player to hit the first ball to him, hit the second close to the net and hit the last one to the back court. Multiple variations can be done.

### Step 2: Intermediate

The general tactical goal at this stage is to develop a series of basic tactical patterns for all shots. Some specific tactical goals that should be learned at this stage are:

#### A Power

As the player grows up he is able to hit more powerful shots (technical goal), but he has to know how to use this power in an appropriate way (tactical goal). The tactical uses of power are:

- \* To reduce time of opponent response
- \* To attack
- \* To make winning shots
- \* To gain space of own court
- \* To change the rhythm.

The coach should teach the player to:

- \* Never hit the ball hard when he is in difficulty
- \* Hit the ball hard only when the ball is above net level, or when he is in advantage in the score.

Basket drills, rallies with the coach or between players are the best ways to practice the tactical use of power.

#### B Spin

When the player is able to hit shots with spin (technical goal), he has to know how to use them in rallies and matchplay situations (tactical goal). The tactical uses of spin are, amongst others, the following:

- \* control of power
- \* change of rhythm
- \* height and depth of the ball
- \* variety, surprise, etc.

The coach should teach the player the proper use of spin:

- \* high balls (topspin)
- \* easy low balls (topspin)
- \* difficult low balls (slice)
- \* medium-high balls (flat).

Rallies with the coach and between players are the best ways to practice the tactical use of spin.

#### C Rhythm - pace

Rhythm is the ability to control the cadence of the rally and the match. The players have to know how to control the "tempo" of the rallies. The tactical uses of rhythm are, amongst others:

- \* control of the rally
- \* variety, surprise
- \* reduce time of opponent reaction.

The coach should teach the player the correct use of rhythm:

- \* to change the rhythm in long rallies
- \* to maintain the rhythm against the players with all court game
- \* to use the power, height and depth of the ball to change the rhythm.

Rallies with the coach and between players are the best ways to practice the tactical use of rhythm.

#### C Variety

When the player is able to use all the above basic tactical concepts, he has to combine them in an appropriate way. Variety is the ability to mix up all these concepts with a tactical goal. Make the player develop a style of play as complete as possible and without weaknesses. Rallies with the coach and between players are the best ways to practice the tactical use of variety (eg. by not hitting two similar shots in a row).

#### D Basic tactical patterns

At this stage of development, the coach has to teach a series of basic tactical patterns that are divided into patterns for shot use, patterns for court geometry and patterns for point play.

#### Shot used:

**Serve:** Serve slice open to the left box and to the centre of the right box, serve flat to the middle in both sides, serve top spin to the centre in the left box and open to the right box.

**Forehand:** Use it in 3/4 of the court and in all returns if possible.

**Backhand:** Play crosscourt to rally from the baseline and play down the line to approach the net and for winners.

**Volleys:** Play no more than 3 volleys in a row and always plays the winning volley to the open court.

**Overhead:** Direct the ball always to the weak side of the opponent.

**Approach:** Start with a down the line approach and direct the volley to the open court.

**Return:** Pass the ball over the net. Do not make any mistakes in the second serve return.

### Court geometry:

Court coverage (angles theory), court zones (3 zones theory), tactical footwork, shot direction (play down the line to approach and crosscourt to rally), direct the ball safely back to where it comes from.

### Point patterns:

Attack in the two first points of each game, when you are ahead, when you are down 0-40, 15-40, or in the first match ball.

### Step 3: Advanced

The general tactical goal at this stage is to develop a personal style of play. Some specific tactical goals that should be learned at this stage are:

#### A Anticipation

This goal is basic in shots like return of serve, volley, mid-court game, passing-shots, etc. Coaches should teach the player to get as much information as possible from the opponent's movements and characteristics and from the game situation (score, etc). When the player is able to do this he has to use his experience and knowledge to analyse what his opponent is going to do, and then he has to react as quickly as he can. Anticipation is improved through match observation of basic tactical patterns, ball drills, court coverage drills, double practice matches, matchplay practice situations, etc.

#### B Percentage play

This tactical aspect is often applied on the serve, the approach and the net game, but it can also be used for baseline play, winning shots, types of errors (forced and unforced), etc. For proper percentage play the player should focus on: his own strong points, his opponent weaknesses and the match situation. Coaches should teach the player to think during change-overs and analyse between points what is happening in the match. The best way to practice percentage play is in matchplay practice situations in which the coach can interrupt between points and make comments during change-overs.

### C Shot selection

This goal could be taught in early stages with the 3 court zones theory (red, yellow and green) and through basic tactical patterns (what to do in different given situations). Shot selection is the ability to choose one specific tool (shot, movement, etc.) according to player, opponent and situational characteristics. Coaches should ensure that players have a wide variety of possibilities in each situation (good technique) before starting with shot selection procedures. The process to learn this tactical goal is the following: observation, selection, post shot analysis and feedback. Shot selection is improved through match observation of basic tactical patterns and matchplay situations with continuous communication between coach and player.

### D Match analysis

This issue could be partly introduced in the previous stage with basic tactical matchplans, point patterns in practice, and fundamentals of post-match evaluation. Match analysis is the ability to make plans in advance, to apply them on court and to obtain valuable conclusions. Coaches can use computers, scorecards, notes, video tapes or other procedures to explain what should be done. Players have to start their matches with a clear main tactical plan and several secondary alternatives. At the end of the match and after the analysis they have to keep in mind two or three positive conclusions that can help them to improve their game. Match analysis is improved through matchplay practice situations and matches observation.

### E Personal style of play

At this stage of development the player should have a personal style of play based on his particular technical, physical, tactical and mental characteristics. The coach has to put together all the tactical knowledge of the player to define his style of play. The main styles of play are the following: aggressive baseliner, counterpunching baseliner, server and volleyer (net rusher), and all court player. The defensive style of play has practically disappeared. Personal style of play can be improved through matchplay practice situations in which the coach varies the game conditions: serve and volley, return and volley, baseline play, all court play, etc.

### F Adaptation to different situations

This concept refers to the ability of adapting one's game to the opponent's and to the situational characteristics. Players should be able to adapt their game to opponents of all gamestyles and to situations that might vary from one moment to another: weather conditions (wind, rain, sun, lighting, etc.), officials decisions, audience reactions, unexpected situations, etc. These aspects can be improved through matchplay practice situations.

## CONCLUSION

In our opinion, tactics should be taught in a progressive step by step system. This methodology will allow the coach to present new concepts and ideas that will improve the tactical awareness of the player in the different stages of his development.

# DEALING WITH PRESSURE

*By Dr Aidan Moran (Ireland)*

*This article first appeared in the LTA's "Coaches and Coaching" publication*

"My mind started getting ahead of me and that was a mistake... I started thinking, wow, I was beating the no. 1 player in the world." (Lisa Raymond, USA, after she had lost to Steffi Graf in the Pathmark Tennis Classic in Mahwah, New Jersey, 23 July 1994, despite taking the first set 6-4 and serving for a 5-3 lead in the second set.)

## INTRODUCTION

As the rising young American touring professional Lisa Raymond discovered last year, a sudden realisation of the importance of the moment can cause players to think too far ahead, "freeze" on court, become tentative in play and "choke"

when attempting to “close out” important matches. This pattern of anxious behaviour is a characteristic of the “pressure” experience. If players become too focused on the future (eg. on the possible results of what they are doing), their performance usually begins to deteriorate. Paradoxically, in such situations, it appears that the more a player wants to win, the worse she/he seems to perform. How can we explain this puzzle that the harder we try, the worse we play? More importantly, how can we help players to recognise and cope with pressure situations which occur predictably during competitive matches at all levels of tennis?

In order to answer these questions, we need to explore the nature and effects of “pressure” in tennis. As we shall see, “pressure” or anxiety comes from interpreting a particular situation in a fearful or “negative” way. But by implementing an automatic “action plan” as soon as the warning signs of anxiety occur, we can learn to make our nervous energy work for, rather than against, us. Therefore, tennis players can be trained to see that although pressure situations are common in matches, the anxiety which they generate is not inevitable. For example, by reminding themselves to **stay in the present** (“this point, now!”) and by giving themselves a **specific job on each point** (eg. “deep approach”), players learn to conquer their fears and to concentrate only on what they can control. The value of this strategy is that anxiety is reduced significantly when “**task-relevant**” behaviour replaces “**result conscious**” behaviour. Overall, therefore, the key to handling pressure is to focus one’s concentration outwards rather than inwards, to devote one’s mental energy to the ball rather than to the possible result of the match. In short, when anxious players discover that the **ball** never knows the score, their anxiety tends to disappear.

## Pressure and perception

According to psychologists, we experience “pressure” whenever we believe that some demanding situation threatens to “overwhelm” us in some way. Therefore, anxiety is the result of a discrepancy between what we think we can do (our abilities) and what we think we are expected to do (the perceived demands of the situation). Common pressure situations in tennis include serving to stay in a match or falling behind to someone whom one is expected to beat. In both cases, a fear of failure may evoke within us feelings of tension, unhappiness and a pattern of tentative play. Usually, the more importance we attribute to the situation, the more we fear failure and the worse the pressure becomes. Additional symptoms of the “pressure reaction” include rapid, shallow breathing, muscular weakness, a “jerky” rhythm of play, poor decision making and a persistent sense of pessimism about the future. It seems that everything is going wrong - and that there is nothing one can do about it. But that’s where we are going wrong.

To explain, although these characteristics of anxiety are unpleasant, they are **not inevitable**. Put simply, pressure arises from a particular way of **perceiving** a given situation. Therefore, if we learn to interpret that situation in a different way, many of these fear symptoms will disappear. For example, imagine what would happen in a tense match if you convinced yourself that the score didn’t matter any more and that you were simply playing a practice match for fun. Clearly, with the threat of failure gone, you would now feel a sense of relief and probably begin to play to the best of your ability. The point is that by re-interpreting the anxious situation as a challenge rather than a threat (by a technique called “cognitive restructuring”), the pressure is reduced.

By thinking of what you have to do on each point, you stop worrying about what might happen in the future.

Of course, such a dramatic transformation in attitude is likely to occur for most players only when they feel that they have nothing to lose. For example, they may decide to “hit out” and throw caution to the wind when they are trailing 1-4 in the final set of a match. Curiously, when this happens, the usual consequence is that the losing player begins to win a few points and the leader begins to play more tentatively. At such moments, a reversal of momentum can occur which could change the eventual course of the match. In summary, what most players need is a practical “action plan” which they can use whenever they experience pressure situations on court. Here are some suggestions for such a plan.

## Action Plan for Pressure Situations

### 1 Understand bodily signals.

Many tennis players mis-interpret physical signs of readiness (eg. rapid heartbeat, a surge of adrenaline) as emotional symptoms of tension. Therefore, before matches, players must learn to welcome signals of bodily alertness (eg. “My body is ready, so let’s go!”) and to see them as essential requirements of a good performance. In fact, many players cannot play properly if they feel that they are not “juiced” or “pumped up” for the game. So, pre-match arousal should always be welcomed as a sign of bodily readiness for the challenge which lies ahead.

### 2 Take control: Slow down and breathe deeply.

During the match, pressure causes us to speed up our behaviour. As a result, we tend to play without any discernible rhythm when we are tense. The obvious solution to this problem is to slow down our play when things go wrong. Tactically, this pause allows us to relax physically (eg. by taking a few deep breaths) and to take stock of the situation. Also, this break may help us to decide on a plan for the next point. Slowing down their behaviour is a strategy used deliberately by players to regain a sense of control over a difficult situation.

It may help to visualise an area beyond the baseline as a “relaxation” or “switch off” zone where you can pause briefly in the interval between points. This zone can be used as a place in which you can replenish your energy and prepare for the next point.

### 3 Give yourself a command: What do I have to do right now?

Anxiety is unhelpful because it confuses our thinking. Specifically, it makes us focus on what might go **wrong** (negative consequences) rather than on what exactly we have to do (positive actions). Therefore, the best way to counteract pressure on court is simply to ask yourself. “What exactly do I have to do right now in this point?”.

By focusing on what we have to do, we avoid the trap of confusing the **facts** of the situation (eg. “I’m 15-40 down”). Therefore, when we experience pressure, we should give ourselves a specific instruction for that point, like “deep return” or “attack the backhand”. Giving yourself short, specific and positively-phrased instructions is a powerful way of dealing with pressure. It encourages people to play their way out of trouble.

#### 4 Focus your concentration on what you can control.

Pressure tends to focus our minds on things which lie outside our control (eg. "What will the coach think of me if I lose?"). By concentrating on these irrelevant matters, we lose our sense of control. For example, we should concentrate hard on each element of our pre-point routines. In this way, we are slowly regaining control over our behaviour - a vital antidote to anxiety.

#### 5 Constructive thinking: Encourage yourself.

When players are tense and make unforced errors, their "self-talk" (ie. what they say to themselves - sometimes aloud!) becomes critical and sarcastic. Of course, such frustration is understandable. But it is **never** helpful to the player and may even make the situation worse. So, players need to be trained to encourage themselves using some or all of the following phrases:

- (i) "One job per point: Come on, let's go"
- (ii) "I've played through worse situations than this one: Come on!"

- (iii) "I'm going to make my nervous energy work for me"
- (iv) "Make the ball do the work"
- (v) "Relax and slow things down: Let him/her wait"
- (vi) "Attack this one, now"
- (vii) "Good try, well done"
- (viii) "It's beginning to flow - here we go"

#### CONCLUSION

Although pressure is encountered in all walks of life, it is especially prevalent in competitive sport simply because the goal of all competition is to determine a winner. But the structure of the game of tennis allows players plenty of opportunities to regain their control over what is happening on court. Therefore, by following the above action-plan for pressure situations, players can be trained to re-structure threatening situations as opportunities to bring out the best in them.

## 9TH ITF WORLDWIDE COACHES WORKSHOP - 1995

The ITF is happy to announce that in conjunction with the European Tennis Association and the Real Federación Española de Tenis the 9th ITF Worldwide Coaches Workshop will be held at the "Centro de Alto Rendimiento" (CAR) outside Barcelona, Spain from 8-14 October 1995.

- CAR is a multi-sport training centre built for the Barcelona Olympic Games
- The lecture hall is excellently equipped and accommodates up to 400 delegates comfortably
- The Centre has indoor and outdoor tennis courts

- A host of other sports facilities are available on-site
- The CAR itself has accommodation for up to 100 delegates at very reasonable rates and the nearby Novotel will provide alternative accommodation.

Final details of the Workshop will be available by June 1995 from all National Associations, but we suggest that you put the dates of 8-14 October in your diary now!

The ITF looks forward to this being another successful Worldwide Workshop.

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